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1962/11/29

110. Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, "Deployment and Withdrawal of Soviet Missiles and Other Significant Weapons in Cuba," 29 November 1962

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SC No. 11173/62

29 November 1962

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MEMORANDUM: Deployment and Withdrawal of Soviet Missiles and Other Significant Weapons in Cuba

NOTE

This memorandum assesses our evidence concerning the number of Soviet missiles deployed to and subsequently withdrawn from Cuba, the chances that Soviet missiles remain in Cuba, and the situation and outlook with respect to rates of withdrawal of IL-28s and other significant Soviet weapons in Cuba.

CONCLUSION

The Soviet claim to have delivered only 42 missiles to Cuba, and to have now withdrawn these, is consistent with our evidence. We cannot exclude the possibility that more actually arrived, and that some therefore remain, but we think that any such number would be small. Available evidence also warrants the conclusion that the Soviets are preparing to withdraw the IL-28s.

1. The Soviets almost certainly intended to deploy substantially more than the 42 missiles which they acknowledged and have withdrawn. We reach this conclusion from the following factors:

a. Nine sites with four launchers each have been identified in Cuba. The Soviets normally provide two missiles for every MRBM and IRBM launcher and, since several of the launchers already had two, we believe that they intended to provide two each for the others, or a total of 72 for the 36 launchers identified. Of these, 48 would be MRBMs, of which we identified 33, and the remainder would be IRBMs, of which we have no evidence that any had reached Cuba by 22 October.

b. The pattern of the nine identified sites strongly suggests that at least one more was planned to form a pair with the ninth. In addition, there is some evidence suggesting that the Soviets planned a third deployment area, in eastern Cuba, to follow upon those in the western and central parts of the country.

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c. Among the Soviet ships which turned back from the Cuba run, upon announcement of the US quarantine, were five of the seven which we know to have been capable of carrying missiles. Thus, the buildup was still in progress on 22 October.

2. It remains to ask whether the Soviets did in fact succeed in bringing more than 42 missiles to Cuba. A review of our information from all sources, presented in detail in Annex A, leads us to believe that they probably did not. This estimate is based on the following factors:

a. Our analysis indicates the missiles were shipped in one piece--less only warheads--on the transporter in a package about 68 feet long as hold cargo.

b. Of the Soviet dry cargo ships involved in the Cuban arms buildup, only seven ships have hatches which would allow stowage of this missile package. We have reasonably good data on the size of these ships. Because of the time in port for both the loading and unloading, apparent Soviet loading practice in deliveries to Cuba, and the size of the ships, we believe the most probable load was six to seven missiles per ship. More would have required extensive shoring between decks and this does not appear to have occurred.

c. These ships made 13 voyages to Cuba during the July-October buildup. The information concerning six of the voyages indicates that they almost certainly must have carried strategic missiles. The other seven, because of their arrival times and evidence of non-missile cargoes, cannot be so identified, but one or more of them may have delivered missiles.

d. Reconstruction of the apparent timetable of the buildup, correlation of photography (both over Cuba and of a number of the ships en route) with all other sources, and analysis of reporting by ground observers all argue against our having wholly missed likely ships other than the seven identified, or other voyages than the thirteen.

3. We can in this way account for at least 36 missiles--six on each of six voyages. The Soviet claim of 42 is consistent with our evidence, but we

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cannot rule out a somewhat higher number, primarily because of the possibility that two or more of the seven other voyages delivered missiles. The analysis of these thirteen voyages in Annex B inclines us to accept a figure not much higher than the 36 we can account for.

4. Sources inside Cuba have provided numerous reports in recent weeks claiming that strategic missiles have been retained in Cuba and concealed from aerial reconnaissance. Most of these sources are untested, and some of their reports are manifestly erroneous. Checks by other methods, including photographic intelligence, have failed to produce clear confirmation of any of these reports, but we are not able to disprove some of them.* Specifically, at Mayari Arriba--about 40 miles northwest of Guantanamo--we have identified both from photography and ground sources a Soviet installation which may be missile-associated. We have not, however, identified any equipment which can be associated with strategic missiles.

5. Since the foregoing evidence is not fully conclusive, we must also consider whether the Soviets would wish to secrete strategic missiles in Cuba. It is doubtful, in our view, that they would do so for strictly military reasons. In the first place, our shipping analysis leaves little room for a number of remaining missiles large enough to be strategically significant at some later date. Such missiles could not participate in an all-out Soviet surprise attack without great risk that preparations would be detected by the US and the entire strategic plan compromised. Neither could the Soviets count on being able to use them in a retaliatory second strike.

6. In contemplating concealment, the Soviets would be aware of great risk. They would foresee that, if the US found out, a second Cuban crisis would ensue which would be unlikely to leave the Castro regime intact. Such a renewed crisis would find the Soviets in an even more disadvantageous position than before to protect their interests or avoid humiliation.

*A summary review of these reports, including the identification of certain areas which remain suspicious, is presented in Annex C.

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Jet Bombers

7. We have confidence in our estimate, based on repeated high- and low-altitude photography over Cuba and photography of deck cargo en route to Cuba, that no more than 42 IL-28s were delivered before the quarantine began. Photography of 25 November indicates that 20 IL-28 fuselage crates remained unopened at San Julian air base and some of the remaining 13 which had previously been partially or fully assembled were being dismantled. Photography indicates that the other nine crates, located at Holguin airfield, were still unopened on 25 November and had been removed to an undetermined location on 27 November.

8. The Soviets could easily ship out all these aircraft by mid-December. Shipping suitable for this purpose is continually available, and almost any four of the Soviet dry-cargo vessels in the Cuban trade could carry the entire number. Those still in crates could be moved to ports in a day or two, and the remainder could be disassembled and moved to ports by the agreed date.

Other Soviet Forces

9. Other Soviet weapon systems in Cuba include surface-to-air missiles, coastal defense missiles, Komar missile boats, and fighter aircraft. In addition, the equipment for four armored combat groups (including possibly 6-10,000 men) remains on the island. We have no evidence of any preparations in Cuba to withdraw these elements. At least four months and on the order of 100 voyages by Soviet ships were required to move these forces to Cuba, and their removal would require an equally large effort. The SA-2 system and the armored combat groups are the bulkiest of these elements, and might require several months for return to the USSR.

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The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited

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The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited: An International Collection of Documents, from the Bay of Pigs to the Brink of Nuclear War

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